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NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO LIBERALIZE THE TARIFF LAWS FOR ART

21 West 53 Street
New York 19, N.Y.

Special to: Cleveland Papers

Sherman E. Lee, Director, and Harold T. Clark, President, of The Cleveland Museum of Art have joined colleagues in 20 leading museums around the country as sponsors of a recently formed "National Committee to Liberalize the Tariff Laws for Art". The Committee, whose headquarters are at 21 West 53 Street, New York City, is urging the passage of Senate Bill S.948 and H.R. 2505 introduced in this session of Congress to bring the outmoded tariff laws up to date.

The proposed amendments, which have bi-partisan support, are designed to correct inconsistencies and unfairness resulting from application of the present law which has not been changed for more than a quarter of a century. Senators Jacob K. Javits (R.N.Y) and Paul Douglas,(D.,Ill.) have introduced the bill in the Senate; Representative Frank Thompson, (D.,N.J.) introduced a companion bill in the House of Representatives.

"Although the original intent of Congress was to permit free entry of all works of art," a Committee statement points out, "the law is now so outdated that many accepted art forms are excluded. The resulting confusion and inconsistencies which affect both modern and traditional works interfere with the importation and circulation of art in this country."

In the House, the bill has been referred to the Committee on Ways and Means of which Ohio Representative, Jackson E. Betts,(R. 6th Dist.) is a member. In the Senate the bill is in the Finance Committee.

Among the inconsistencies in practice arising from the present law cited by the Committee statement were the fact that while abstract painting comes into the country free of duty, abstract sculpture does not. Drawings and paintings using traditional materials are admitted duty free while collages and other works of art using materials

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not specifically listed in the law do not. Recent etchings, woodcuts and engravings come in duty free while lithographs and new print-making processes do not.

Other amendments contained in the bills supported by the Committee affect architectural models, antiques and works of art by primitive peoples. The movement of works of art entered under bond by museums for exhibition purposes is also simplified.

The proposals incorporated in these amendments were prepared by the Committee on Customs of the American Association of Museums, headed by Dorothy H. Dudley, Registrar of the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

In a statement released when he introduced the bill last month, Senator Javits said: "The amendments Senator Douglas and I are proposing would greatly increase the number and kind of original art objects imported into this country by U.S. art museums and dealers as well as art patrons who donate sizeable collections to art institutions; in addition, they would encourage a much freer interchange of works of art between the U.S. and other countries. The loss of tariff revenues to the U.S. due to a more liberal interpretation of the tariff laws, deemed insignificant by authorities, would be more than compensated for by the increased cultural opportunities accruing to the U.S."

R. Sturgis Ingersoll, President of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is chairman of the Committee, whose members include directors and presidents of the following organizations:

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
College Art Association of America
The Cleveland Museum of Art
The Newark Museum
Seattle Art Museum
California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Art Institute of Chicago
The American Federation of Arts
American Institute of Architects
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Museum of Primitive Art
Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn.
The Brooklyn Museum
The Whitney Museum of American Art
The International Council at the Museum of Modern Art
The Museum of Modern Art
The Detroit Institute of Arts
City Art Museum of St. Louis
The American Association of Museums
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

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